



NEWSLETTER APRIL 2013

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EDITORS COLUMN

Hello everyone, Happy Easter Weekend to you all. Chocolate is one popular food over this weekend and with that in mind I just cannot resist telling you about the new stamps issued by Belgium Post. Perhaps this is not news? Perhaps it is. I'm going to show and tell you anyway. :-)

Belgium Post launched new exclusive chocolate stamps to awake the senses. Their adhesive layer is flavored with chocolate and the stamp itself also releases a fragrance of chocolate.

Many stamps issued by Belgium were devoted to "Chocolat". In 1999, it was the process of chocolate producing which was honored; in 2006, the issue devoted to Belgian gastronomy had booked a place to the chocolate.

The five new stamps illustrate chocolate in all its forms: granules, pralines, chocolate spread, lumps and bars. Tony Le Duc, gastronomic photographer, and Kathleen Miller, graphic artist, were responsible for the design of stamps and sheet.

The chocolate taste was incorporated in the gummed part of stamps in the form of essential oil of cocoa, so it releases when licked. The stamps have also chocolate aroma, which rises from the ink to which the flavoring was added. It's not the first time when a scented postage stamp is issued, but this scent is now combined with taste, which is an absolute premiere.



Stamp of the Month



Hardly a collectable stamp in my view, but it sort of has an Easter theme, if you think eggs.

Issued in 1995 and in a MS, which has a nice cat value of £5.50

It wasn't an easy task to find the scent and taste of dark chocolate that characterize Belgian chocolate. Partners from at least four countries (Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland) worked it out jointly. And, this is a limited edition I believe, with only 548,000 stamps being issued.

As for stamps issued to commemorate Easter, or which have an Easter theme, I don't know of many issues. These are the best I could come up with.



As for IPDA News. Sorry I have none for you this month. I have been travelling these past few weeks and been a bit out of touch. Will catch up and report in the May issue.

Thank you to all who contributed this month. Lots to read and I hope something on the following pages to get you thinking, or something to write to me about so we can share amongst the Membership.

Have a good Easter weekend, and a wonderful April. Michael michaelatipda@gmail.com



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WORLD STAMP EXPO—MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA 10—15 MAY 2013

I have written about this event for the past few months but thought I would leave this page in again just as a reminder to all those who might be able to get there; for what will surely be a great exhibition. Would be great to meet up with some of you. (Glen, I will find you and first beer is on me :-)

If you are planning to attend please drop me an email at michaelatipda@gmail.com

Day passes available for sale I understand. The cost is just AUS \$10, available from Australia Post www.shop.auspost.com.au For more details visit <http://worldstampexpo.com.au/>

NEW ISSUE — AUDIBLE STAMPS

Magyar Posta is releasing "audible" postage stamps to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi.

The release is unusual because this is the first time that a QR code has appeared on Hungarian postage stamps.

With a smart phone the Internet information about the bicentenary on the Hungarian State Opera House's web site can be heard and read.

Portraits of the composers Wagner and Verdi are at the centre of the stamp designs, while graphic compositions referring to works by them (Das Rheingold and Aida) are in the background.





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CREATING GREAT STAMP IMAGES FOR INTERNET LISTINGS

As I mentioned in the March Newsletter we have an article from member Don O'Neal from the USA (you can visit his website at <http://www.allclassicstamps.com/>) I hope you enjoy this and find it useful. Thanks Don for this excellent piece and the very useful advice you have shared with us all.

Unlike traditional stamp dealers, IPDA members sell at least some of their stamps via the Internet. Since our customers cannot actually pick up these 'digital' stamps with stamp tongs and examine them with a magnifying glass, it's imperative that we present our stock as accurately as possible in our online listings. Professional stamp images are a reflection of the professionalism of the dealer presenting them and can help generate more sales for your business. This article hopes to teach our members how to produce the best stamp images with the least amount of effort using reasonably priced computer hardware and software you may already own.

What you'll need:

1) A good computer scanner. I recommend the Epson Workforce All-In-One Printer/Scanner/Copier/Fax, but any decent printer/copier/scanner will do. I use Epson scanners because they have superior scanning capabilities, better color matching to the original than most other brands, and excellent stand-alone/plug-in scanning software. These can usually be purchased for under US\$200 at most large retailers, office supply outlets, computer stores, or on-line dealers. You should NEVER use a digital camera for creating your stamp images. You won't get anywhere near the same quality as you get from a true scanner and the images will look like "cheap" snapshots.

2) Good photo editing software (PES). I recommend Adobe Photoshop CS or Photoshop Elements. Whatever software you use, it should have the ability to adjust resolution (d.p.i.) without changing the file size (no resampling), allow for variable rotation of images for proper centering, crop images, and have a sharpening (preferably unsharp mask) filter. You don't have to spend US\$500+ on Adobe CS6 to get good results. The author actually uses CS2 software that was bought in 2005. Our newsletter editor uses Photoshop Elements, which can be purchased for US\$80 or less for the latest version. Older versions of CS and Elements can be purchased online quite reasonably on eBay, etc.

3) A working knowledge of the tools in your PES, their functions, and how to use them, especially with regard to the functions noted in 2) above.

4) At least one clean black-background dealer stock sheet for mounting the stamps to be imaged prior to scanning. I recommend Vario stock sheets, as they produce relatively crisp images, have a deep black background, do not create glare, and, depending on the stamp size, allow stamps to be completely enclosed within the clear sheet pockets.

Down to Business:

Place the stamps to be scanned in the stock sheet as straight as possible, with at least 5mm of space between stamps. When the stock sheet is full, carefully flip the sheet and place it on the scanning bed, also as straight as possible. The less rotation your stamps will need after scanning, the better the quality of your final images will be. Now scan the entire sheet. To save time its best to scan using the scanning plug-in that should be installed into your PES, using the Import function usually found under the File menu. Set your scan resolution to 300 dpi for best results. This value will be changed within the PES to 72 dpi, which will enlarge your final images to a little over 4X actual size when saved for use in your listings.

Once your scanned page appears, you're ready to begin editing. First, be sure your foreground and background color settings are reversed from their default black foreground and white background. Now is a good time to use your PES's Zoom or Magnify tool to display the scan at full (100%) size. Now is also a good time to change your image's resolution from 300 dpi to 72 dpi. In CS2 you would select Image Size... from the Image menu. Change the Resolution setting to 72 dpi and be sure the Resample Image check box is unchecked. Click OK. You should see no visible change to your scan. If the scan is suddenly much smaller on the screen, then you forgot to uncheck the Resample Image box. Just Undo the action and try again.

Next, it's best to check the straightness of your overall image. In Photoshop CS2 I use the Measure tool to mark a line running along the length of the pocket seam on one row to set the Arbitrary Rotation angle used for straightening the page. The Rotate -> Arbitrary... tool in the Image menu is then applied, using the value set by the Measure tool. Since the default foreground/background colors have been reversed, any new space on the page created by the rotation should be black. Of course, if your scanned page is already perfectly straight, the above step won't be necessary.



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CREATING GREAT STAMP IMAGES FOR INTERNET LISTINGScont'd

Now that your scanned page is nice and straight, it's time to use the PES's Sharpen or Unsharp Mask tool to get rid of any blurring of your image caused by the scanner and/or the page rotation. If you use the Unsharp Mask tool (preferred), set the Amount to 50%, the Radius to 1.0 pixels, and the Threshold to 0 levels. This is the default settings in CS2. Be careful not to sharpen your image too much as this can cause unwanted artifacts to appear in the image. At this point it would be a good idea to save your scanned page to your hard drive.

Now it's time to create individual files for each of the stamps on the page. Use the Rectangular Marquee (selection) tool to draw a dotted box around the first stamp on the page. Be sure to select as little black background area as possible without actually cutting into the stamp or perfs. Remember, you're selling stamps, not black backgrounds. A large background area will make your stamp appear smaller and less important. Once you've made your selection Copy it (Ctrl-C), create a New page (Ctrl-N) (which should already be set to the size of the selection area), and Paste (Ctrl-V). In Photoshop your image will be placed into a new Layer in the file rather than the background. If this is the case you should Flatten the image to make it the background.

The same process is used on these individual images as was used on the original scan with respect to straightening and sharpening. Most stamps have a border around the image that can be used as a guide to straightening the stamp the same way the pocket seam was used for straightening the original scan. If there's no frame around the image or the background isn't "boxed," then text printed on the stamp (such as the country name) can often be used as a guide for straightening the image. As a last resort, the lower parts of the perforations (the dips) can be used as guides. If your stamp image is really crooked to begin with you may need to crop out excess background area after rotating. Once each image is adjusted it can then be saved to your hard drive.

Congratulations! You should now have nice, crisp, well centered stamp images to use in your listings.

About the author: Before retiring in 2008, Don spent 20 years as a graphic designer for a national yellow pages publisher, designing and producing display advertising. He worked as a graphic designer for 32 years all together and won several awards for his design work. He has now gone back to his early love of stamp collecting and now has his own virtual "stamp shop" at BidStart.com, which helps him pay a few bills from time to time.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

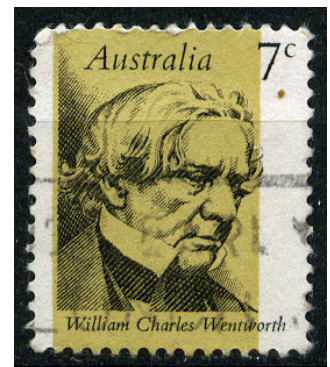
On the subject of a recent fraud; this from Philippe Poppe who commented that he gets a lot of unsolicited email..... Michael, That reminds me of the new frauds going on now for a few months. I'm getting tens of emails a week now from Indian, Sri-Lankian and Pakistani persons offering me a very rare stamp worth high dollars figures with many zeros, which I could buy within the few hours for an extremely low price, all this documented with an extremely blurry cellphone photo if paid immediately with Western Union. Sometimes they recycle emails with different senders on the same day.

Example: They would offer a print error Indian 1 anna (SG161) for 7999\$ which I could buy if I transfer the money within 1 hour for 400\$ with Western Union. The picture shows a very blurry SG161 which you could barely identify it as a stamp.

Personally I'm wondering if anybody every gets trapped by this, or is it a real deal? Have other members got anything to share on this topic / fraud ??? On the following page we have more on fraud, the IPDA Confidential List and similar.



Examples above and below showing poorly scanned images



Examples showing more professional presentation of the images





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GLEN STEPHENS WRITES — RE-PUBLISHED WITH KIND PERMISSION

The topic of fraudulent sales and fraudulent buyer practices has a larger mention this month because it seems there is a heightened level of such activity. The following was originally published in Glen's Easter email and I thought worth sharing again for those of you who have not seen it. Good advice as always from Glen and something to pass on to customers perhaps. Remind them how important it is to deal with an accredited IPDA, or other philatelic organization, member. My acknowledgement and sincere thanks again to Glen for the following:

An URGENT warning to all those who buy and sell stamps on eBay. There is getting to be an epidemic of stamps being offered that the sellers simply do not own.

That "cheap" Buy It Now item is not so "cheap" if you pay for it and it never arrives. Or if a Registered envelope arrives with folded up paper sheets in there. YOU are then generally 100% out of pocket, whether you paid by Paypal or not.

One ebayer for 15 years, with 1000s of feedbacks, and very experienced in the stamp world, bought this gem lot for £900 as "Buy It Now – <http://tinyurl.com/coccm9s> - and nearly lost his shirt

Of course they did not exist, and they are worth \$10,000-\$15,000 more than if they did, as we all know.

Ebay "Bargains" are not bargains if you might lose your £900 paid for them. Buy higher priced items off a REAL dealer - a member of trade bodies, and he is there next year, and next decade mostly likely.

Full details on that scam and all the other mass forgeries being offered each day on eBay are outlined here. And WHICH accounts are being used. If you use eBay you MUST read this -

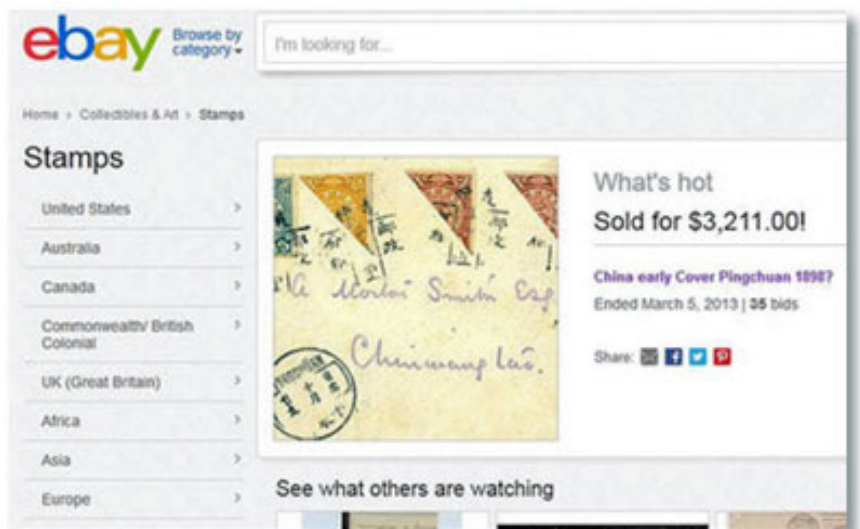
<http://www.glenstephens.com/snapril13.html>

Dozens of ebay Bunnies bid this UNIQUE cover up to \$3211 – despite the image simply being apparently stolen/lifted off a real Stamp Auction site. Ebay were bragging about what a great deal it was - I bet someone right now is sad they lost \$3211. Would YOU have bid?

If Ebay do not bother policing active forgers, it needs the stamp community to do it for them as best we can. eBay is NOT always a safe place to buy stamps, as they keep boasting.

eBay frankly do little or nothing as they MAKE money - about 12% of the purchase price, with eBay and PayPal fees added, when outright forgeries are sold. A \$1000 sale of fakes MAKES them \$120 or so. So they do not care one hoot it seems.

eBay openly allow these cons to have 10 or 20 active handles, and 10 or 20 fake "Shill" bidding accounts, to push up the GENUINE bidders like YOU, and generally do nothing when advised, despite their alleged rules to the contrary. So Buyer BEWARE. On both





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IPDA CONFIDENTIAL LIST

The following observations from Roger West, Director IPDA for GB & Europe and Alan Devine, IPDA Chairman and Confidential List Officer.

The confidential list is a very important aspect of IPDA membership and from my standpoint, it has two big advantages. Firstly it lists known fraudsters so you can check to see if the person you're dealing with is already known to be 'dodgy'. Secondly and maybe more importantly, it gives you the opportunity to report anybody you feel has violated some code of ethics.

I recently had a case where my customer claimed he never received an item and took out a Paypal claim to get his money back. Despite the fact I offered to send another item he insisted on a refund which prompted me to look into his Delcampe feedback record – sure enough I was just one more person who had fallen victim to this guy who was working the system – he had well over 50 negative feedbacks, mainly regarding non-receipt.

If the claim is for a large amount, then the chances are we can't afford the loss but if it's a small amount, as in this case, it's almost as annoying to think this person can be so petty. So, to take up my second 'advantage' I reported him to Delcampe in the hope they remove him and I also sent details to Alan for the IPDA Confidential list.

So if you get turned over by a crook, it's very nice to know you're not alone AND you can do something about it. You may not get your money back but at least you get the satisfaction of maybe preventing him getting away with it again.

Roger West, Avion Thematics <http://www.avionstamps.com/>

From our Chairman:

The current confidential list was recently sent out to Members for their information.

I have not received a single addition to the list since February 2012 which is very surprising indeed considering the number of reports that appear on confidential lists of other associations.

So as a reminder to all members, please can you contact me (Alan Devine) with any proposed additions to the list at any time.

If one of the reasons why we do not receive many additions to the list is because our procedure is too formal and requires considerable information (proof) from the person submitting the proposal then I (Alan) will look to see if it is possible to simplify the procedure and reduce the workload.

Any thoughts or advice / help you as Members wish to make, please contact me on alan.devine@devalri.com

Alan Devine, IPDA Chairman.

CLOSING REMARKS

Glen's link <http://www.glenstephens.com/snapril13.html> is to his Market Matters page, published in the April edition of StampNews Australia and it describes in more detail the eBay scams and scammers. Worth a read in my view.

Alan asked why we do not have more such names on our Confidential List? Probably various reasons but I wonder if it is because Members are reading the Stampboards listings and finding that sufficient? Or maybe the various postings on numerous Yahoo Stamp groups? I see many names mentioned on these Yahoo groups and while most are for "traders" rather than sellers these are also names we should be aware of perhaps? All comments from Members are most welcome.

And, as I always say, your articles or ideas for articles are always welcome.

Thanks for those of you who have contributed to this issue and apology if I didn't publish your material. Next issue ok.

Have a great Easter. Best wishes, Michael michaelatipda@gmail.com